

Washington, D.C. - The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved the Taking Responsible Action for Community Safety (TRACS) Act, H.R. 6707, at a full meeting of the House Transportation Committee today. Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08), an original co-sponsor of the bill, testified earlier this month during a committee hearing, urging support of H.R. 6707, which would clarify that the Surface Transportation Board must consider the effects of rail expansion on local communities and taxpayers as part of its core mission.

Bean helped introduce the bill with House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar (MN-08) as part of her fight against Canadian National Railway's proposed purchase of the EJ&E rail line. Bean first alerted Oberstar to the devastating impact of the proposed CN transaction when she brought him on a tour of the region earlier this year.

"The committee's swift bipartisan action in approving this bill is a sign of how universal this issue is among communities across the nation and how deep the need is for clarification," Bean said. "Committee members have sent a clear message to the STB that community impact should be a top priority and an integral part of their decision making process."

The Taking Responsible Action for Community Safety (TRACS) Act, H.R. 6707, would clarify the board's authority over any transaction involving at least one major (Class 1) railroad and would require the STB to consider "the safety and environmental effects of the proposed transaction, including the effects on local communities against the potential benefits to commerce." If the adverse effects on communities are significant or outweigh the potential benefits to commerce and competitiveness, the STB would be required to disapprove or mitigate the transaction.

Along with threats to suburban rail, CN's proposed purchase would result in up to a 900 percent increase in rail traffic along the EJ&E line, cutting through many suburban communities. The increase will have a significant negative impact on traffic congestion along major roads, public safety, quality of life, environmental quality, and local economies.

The TRACS Act, H.R. 6707, is sponsored by Rep. James Oberstar (MN-08), and was originally cosponsored by Reps. Melissa Bean (IL-08), Judy Biggert (IL-13), Pete Visclosky (IN-01), Bill Foster (IL-14), Don Manzullo (IL-16), Peter Roskam (IL-6), Dave Hobson (OH-07), Richard Neal (MA-02), Mike Thompson (CA-01), Steve Kagen (WI-08), Ron Kind (WI-03), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20), Kathy Castor (FL-11), Shelly Berkley (NV-01), Darlene Hooley (OR-05), and Bruce Braley (IA-01), Deborah Pryce (OH-15), Wayne Gilchrest (MD-1), Ray LaHood (IL-18), and Bud Cramer (AL-5).